

THE BATTLE OPENED.

THE TOWN IN THE CRUSADE AGAINST THE NORTH JERSEY STREET RAILWAY COMPANY.

The Town Council adopted a resolution and appointed a committee to confer with other towns along the Bloomfield Avenue line in a move to secure better car service. The Board of Trade also takes a hand in the matter.

The Town Council took important action Monday night in the fight that is being made against the North Jersey Street Railway Company to compel it to make better service on its Bloomfield Avenue line. Councilman John R. Conlan introduced the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Chairman of the Town Council be directed to appoint a committee consisting of two Councilmen to act in conjunction with similar committees of neighboring municipalities along the line of the North Jersey Street Railway Company on Bloomfield Avenue, with a view to securing better travelling facilities for the public on said company's line; and it is further resolved, that a certified copy of this resolution be presented to all the municipalities interested in this matter, together with the names of the Councilmen who may be appointed to said committee.

In accordance with the provision of the resolution, Chairman Peterson appointed the Finance Committee of the Council, Messrs. Moore and Conlan, a special committee to act for this town in the matter. Mr. Conlan says that the matter going to be a vigorous one, and that there will be no let-up until the railway company furnishes a service that meets the requirements of the patrons of the Bloomfield Avenue line.

The Board of Trade at its meeting Wednesday night also took a hand in the street railway matter and instructed its committee on railroad interests, consisting of Theodore H. Ward, David Oakley, Matthew McCroddan, Harry E. Richards, and Alfred H. Elgerley to act with the committee appointed by the Town Council. The inefficient street railway service was brought up at the Board of Trade meeting by James H. Moore, who spoke of the inconveniences and discomforts now suffered by the patrons of the trolley cars. Mr. Moore said that if the present state of the service was accepted without complaint, it would simply go from bad to worse. "Couldn't be worse," interjected Chairman McCroddan.

John R. Conlan in response to an inquiry made a statement telling of the action taken by the Town Council, and he invited the co-operation of the Board of Trade with the Council in the fight for a better street railway service.

Joseph R. Maxfield asked to be informed under what clauses in the street railway franchise it was possible to make a successful attack against the North Jersey Street Railway Company. Mr. Maxfield enumerated a few of the inconveniences now suffered by the passengers and asked if any of these could be used as evidence to demonstrate that the company was violating the terms of its franchise.

John A. Lawrence, who was a member of the Town Committee when the franchise was granted, said it was a long time ago and he could not recall its provisions, but there was no doubt at all but the requirements of the franchise were not being complied with.

Theodore H. Ward, Chairman of the Finance Committee on Railroad Interests, suggested that Secretary Quinn be directed to communicate to the Town Council the action taken by the Board of Trade, in order that the Council may understand that the action taken is that of the entire Board, and not that of a sub-committee.

Ordinance Passed.

An ordinance granting a franchise to the Essex Cross Railway Company passed its second reading at the meeting of the Irvington Town Council on Monday night. It was amended in several sections and the original introduction of the ordinance was made on Monday. One clause of the ordinance provides that forty tickets good within the town limits only will be sold for one dollar. The fare from Irvington to Bloomfield is to be five cents. It is expected that the ordinance will pass at the next meeting of the Council.

Still Confering.

Details of the East Orange City Council and the Orange Water Company are still confering over the water supply situation. It is said that the water company will not sign a contract unless the city agrees to take over the company's plant at the price fixed by the commissioners.

Question of Policy.

The change made in the form of local government by the adoption of the Town Act necessitated a number of changes in the methods of procedure in the carrying out of the functions of government. Some of the workings of the Town Law relative to the carrying out of certain public improvements are not yet a familiar subject among the citizens in general, and even with some in official authority.

One of the important changes that followed the change of government is at present a matter of official discussion and of public concern. This is the matter of opening new streets. Under the old Township Law a petition had to be presented to the County Court for the opening of a new street in cases where two or more properties were concerned, and Surveyors of Highways were designated by the court to attend to all the legal detail in connection with the formal opening of the street.

Under the Town Act the Town Council and not the County Court is the body petitioned for the opening of a street, and the Board of Assessors take charge of that part of the work formerly attended to by the Surveyors of Highways. The same method of procedure applies in the laying of a sewer in a street, or in the macadamizing, curbing and flagging of a street. The law allows benefited property ten years in which to pay an assessment levied for benefits resulting from improvements.

It is optional with the Council to grant or reject petitions for improvements. If a petition is granted it is referred to the Board of Assessors to make an estimate of the cost of the work, and public notice is given of an intention to carry out the work, and all property owners affected by the proposed improvement are notified to it are notified to present their objections. All the legal preliminaries being complied with, the Council awards contracts and the cost of the work is defrayed by the issuing of improvement indebtedness certificates, which after the work is accepted are redeemed by the proceeds from street improvement bonds issued after the work is accepted or completed, and the Board of Assessors assess the cost of the work on the property in the street in which an improvement has been made.

By some people this system of carrying out street improvements is regarded as highly advantageous. It gives encouragement to enterprising people to open up and develop property, and the cost is charged directly to the property benefited and is not a general tax. On the other hand, some people disapprove of the plan and regard it as conducive to the schemes of speculators, and believe it results in placing the town under a heavy financial obligation pending the payment of the assessments levied.

Several streets have now been improved under the regulations prescribed by the Town Act and the town is now carrying somewhere around \$12,000 of improvement certificates. That the town is carrying this obligation is not as much the fault of the law as it is the fault of the officials in applying it.

A brief statement of the status of several streets which have been improved under the Town Act will afford some idea as to the merits and demerits of the system. Osborn Street was the first street opened, extended and widened under the provisions of the Town Act. The cost of the improvement was about \$950, and with the exception of \$135 the assessment levied by the Board of Assessors was promptly paid as soon as the bills were sent out. In the case of Osborn Street there is no question but what an improvement of general benefit to the town was secured, and the tax rates along the street were considerably increased as a result of the improvement.

Charles Street in the Third Ward was the next street opened and widened under the Town Act, and the cost of the improvement was about \$1,000, and the assessment with one exception of \$100 has all been paid and was paid promptly after the bills were sent out. The improvement of the street resulted in several transfers of property and the erection of two new houses and an increase of fifty per cent. in the total amount of tax rates in the street.

The Essex Avenue sewer was the

third improvement made under the provisions of the Town Act. This street being partly in Glen Ridge, only half the cost applied to town property. In the case of this sewer a clause was inserted in the contract fixing the time of acceptance of the sewer at one year after the date of its completion; consequently no bills have yet been sent out to the property-owners. There is every reason to believe that the assessment will be promptly paid as soon as the bills are sent out, and it is the town's own fault that the obligation is still outstanding. One year is too long a period to wait for the formal acceptance of work of this kind. The cost of the Bloomfield half of Essex Avenue sewer was \$750.

The Morton Street sewer, which cost \$1,050, has been completed some time, but no bills have been sent out to the property-owners yet. Some difficulty has been experienced in ascertaining the names of some of the owners of property, and the delay in getting the bills out is no fault of the law.

The Linden Avenue improvement, which cost \$3,200, was of a different character than others above mentioned, but was carried out under the law. In this street cobble gutters, curbing, and flagstones were laid, and a one-year acceptance clause was also inserted in this contract. There has been an unexplainable delay on the part of the Council in dealing with the Linden Avenue case, and as a consequence no bills have been sent out. Other streets now in progress of improvement under the Town Act are Walnut Street extension, Jerome Place, Delaware Avenue, and a sewer in Charles Street. In the case of the latter street the opening and widening of it made it possible to put a sewer there which will result in great sanitary benefit to that locality. A petition is now before the Council for the opening and widening of Weaver Avenue and Cedar Street.

It is evident that all the improvements thus far made and asked for under the system provided for in the town act have been of a beneficial character, and while some real estate speculators may have derived some direct benefit, the town has derived a greater general benefit in the improved appearance of streets and in improved sanitary conditions, and by an increase in tax rates. The fact that the town is carrying a large obligation in the way of assessments that are unprovided for as yet is no fault of the system. It is rather due to a failure of the Council to thoroughly appreciate the workings of the system.

One great advantage of this system is that these improvements, if the system is properly enforced, do not become a general tax, but are paid for wholly by the property benefited. Unnecessary delay on the part of the Council in promptly getting the machinery of the system in working order when an improvement is petitioned for may be a source of some extra expense to the people desiring the improvement.

The Town Act provides a system of making improvements that is intended to encourage enterprise in that direction, and as all improvements tend to increased taxable valuations and increased revenue, it is obvious that the system is right in line with the greatest need of the town. The greatest advantage of the system is the comparatively easy provision it makes for the payment of the cost of improvements. It has been proposed in the Council to put a check on this feature of the system by compelling petitioners for improvements to advance from fifty to seventy-five per cent. of the cost of the work in advance.

To enforce such a rule would simply result in the implication that the policy of the Council was to deter and discourage improvement and such an impression spread abroad would work injury to the town. Thus far, the only objection raised against the Town Act system of improvements has been raised in the Town Council, and it is to the effect that too large an amount of unpaid assessments are not adequately provided for. The reason that they are not provided for is the fault of the Council itself.

Instead of discouraging the recourse of property-owners to the use of the Town Act improvement system, the Council should encourage it, particularly in the matter of sidewalks, curbs, and gutters. Many thickly populated streets in the town are sorely in need of such things, and the Town Act provides an easy method of getting them, and that fact should be impressed upon the people and they should be urged to take advantage of the opportunity rather than be hampered and discouraged.

UNPAID ASSESSMENTS

Lead to an Animated Discussion in the Town Council Session—Councilman Walker Opposes the Weaver Avenue and Cedar Street Petitions—Views of Several Councilmen on the Subject.

The Board of Assessors submitted their report of the estimate of the cost of the opening and widening and extending of Weaver Avenue and Cedar Street at the Town Council meeting Monday night. The report showed the amounts of damages and benefits allowed the property-owners along the street.

Councilman Conlan moved to accept the report, and a general discussion of the subject of street improvement under the Town Act system followed.

Councilman Walker opposed accepting the report on the ground that the town was now carrying obligations to the amount of \$12,000, representing money laid out in improvements, and none of which had been collected. Mr. Walker reiterated the views he has expressed on this same subject at a previous meeting, and advised a halt until outstanding obligations were paid.

Councilman Farrand said that he partly concurred with Mr. Walker in his views on the matter of opening New Street. Mr. Farrand said that in his business travels through the country he had an opportunity to examine into the workings of other municipalities, and he found that Bloomfield was alone in this method of improving streets. He was of the opinion that petitioners for improvements ought to advance from fifty to seventy-five per cent. of the cost of requested improvements.

Mr. Conlan, in reply to Mr. Walker's statement that the Council was going to make a change in the amount of money to be deposited with a petition for improvements, said he was under the impression that any change that was made was to apply to future streets, and not to any of those now under consideration by the Council. Mr. Conlan pointed out that much of the preliminary work had been done in the case of the Weaver Avenue and Cedar Street petitions.

Councilman Harrison spoke in favor of disposing of the current obligations outstanding before assuming any more new ones. Councilman Moore was of the opinion that all petitions for improvements should be viewed from the standpoint of general benefit to the town as well as the individual property-owner. If an improvement effected a material increase in the tax rates, it was good business policy on the part of the town to carry it out.

Hugh D. King, one of the petitioners for the Weaver Avenue and Cedar Street improvement, asked permission to address the Council on the subject under discussion. Mr. King spoke principally against any change in the amount of money required as a deposit and appeared to be under the impression that the proposed change was to apply to the petition in which he was interested, and he accused the Council for alleged breach of faith with him and other petitioners. Mr. King pointed out the large increase in taxable valuations that would follow the requested improvement. In anticipation of it he was building three new houses on the property affected, and several others among the petitioners proposed, he said, to build. Mr. Moore took exception to some of Mr. King's implications about unfair business dealing on the part of the Councilmen.

Seymour P. Gilbert, Clerk of the Board of Assessors, who is probably the best posted man in the town on the subject of the street improvements carried out under the provisions of the Town Act, at the request of Councilman Moore took part in the discussion. Mr. Gilbert pointed out that the outstanding indebtedness incurred for the opening of new streets in several instances could not be collected because no bills could be sent out until the Council has performed its part of the proceedings in connection with the improvements.

In the matter of the Weaver Avenue improvement Mr. Farrand asked that action be delayed until he could make some inquiry among the people affected by it as to the desirability of the improvement. Mr. Conlan withdrew his motion of acceptance in favor of a motion by Mr. Farrand that the matter be laid over until next meeting.

Mr. Walker wants a new sub-committee created that shall take in hand these street improvement petitions, and shall report to the Council all the details in connection with each one of them, particularly the terms of any contracts made in connection with them. Mr. Walker expressed great surprise to find that a clause had been inserted in some of the contracts fixing an entire year between the completion of a contract and the acceptance of the work by the Council.

FIRE HOUSES

AGAIN A SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION BY THE TOWN COUNCIL.

Fire Committee Directed to Investigate and Report on Several Propositions Relative to Better Headquarters for the Fire Companies—Councilmen Disposed to Avoid a Bond Issue and Prefer Other Arrangements.

Councilman Unangst, Chairman of the Fire Committee, again addressed the Town Council Monday night on the subject of headquarters for the fire companies. Mr. Unangst described to the Council in particular the condition of the headquarters of Essex Hook and Ladder Company No. 1, Phoenix Hose Company No. 1 and Active Hose Company No. 2. All these houses have leaky roofs, and while one or two tons of coal were burned in each place it is impossible to keep them warm.

Mr. Unangst said that in point of service this town has a good volunteer fire department, as any town in the State, but it was discouraging and demoralizing to the companies to be housed in untenable buildings.

He also spoke of the deplorable transportation service of the fire apparatus, and he described a recent scene on Glenwood Avenue when men and boys tried to push horse and hose wagon to a fire.

Mr. Unangst's opinion was that the only proper solution of the trouble was the issuing of bonds for a sum sufficient to erect public buildings, in one of which the town police department could be located, and also the town offices, for which the latter was paying \$1,000 per year rent.

Mr. Unangst expressed himself as strongly opposed to any further renting of buildings for fire or any other public purposes. He also said that the fire tower, in which is suspended a 2,000 pound bell, was in a dangerous condition, and that he would not be surprised if it fell during a heavy wind storm.

Mr. Farrand, also of the Fire Committee, said that he had not had the same opportunity as his colleague in examining into the state of the fire houses, but he had no doubt at all that the circumstances were as stated. Mr. Farrand was not, however, disposed to favor an issue of bonds at the present time for the construction of fire houses, and if it came to that he would advocate the calling of the citizens together to give expression to their sentiments on the subject.

Mr. Moore desired that the Fire Committee make a thorough investigation of the matter of fire headquarters and report to the Council the advantages, if any, of building new houses from the proceeds of an issue of bonds, the cost of putting the present fire houses in proper shape, and also ascertain if any individuals were ready to erect buildings that could be used for fire houses and rent them to the town, and on what terms such enterprises would be undertaken. Mr. Moore desired it understood that he was not committing himself to any bonding scheme, or advocating such. What he wanted was information from which the Council could judge of the comparative cost and advantages of any one plan over another.

Mr. Conlan said that, in addition to the cost of buildings, the Fire Committee in its report should also include the cost of maintenance of the department. The matter of horse hire, he said, was an important item, and should be given consideration. Mr. Conlan recalled a proposition made at one time by Thomas H. Decker, the livery stable man, to put up a building that would accommodate the Truck Company and Phoenix Hose Company and lease the building to the town. He suggested that Mr. Decker be consulted in regard to the matter.

School children of Canton who could not be kept from letting fall their

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and blue.

"Star Spangled

Banner." and "Kelly Roused the Flag."



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